

Help for St. Mary's Water System

By Andrew Geiger, (406) 841-2740 ageiger@mt.gov

Saint Mary's Wide Reach

Montana State Government is joining a multi-level effort to repair key infrastructure needed to maintain the Saint Mary Diversion in Glacier County. The water system that supplies much of the Hi-Line's drinking and irrigation water is aged and failing. "This is an enormous effort, but many hands make the workload lighter," Governor Brian Schweitzer said. "Because this watershed impacts farms and ranches and families for 300 miles, we are bringing every available state resource to the forefront."

Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger leads a group of state, federal and tribal officials, as well as concerned citizens, in addressing the problem. He explained that the current system uses large-scale canals, pumps and pipes to divert water from the St. Mary River to the Milk River, eventually irrigating 140,000 acres of farmland and providing drinking water for many communities across the Hi-Line. "This is so important because without this system the Milk River would run dry 7 out of 10 years," Bohlinger said.

The Lieutenant Governor will join Commerce Director Tony Preite on January 25th to award \$500,000 to Glacier County from the Treasure State Endowment Program to fix a bridge used in the Diversion. (Other state resources are allocated for separate parts of the repair project.)

Preite explained that this Commerce Department funding is allocated to address serious health and safety issues in Montana communities, and that a priority is taking care of the basic elements of infrastructure. "The more we progress as a civilization through technology, the more we go back to the importance of our key resources of clean air and water in our wide open Montana spaces," Preite said.